

FREY, David C

DOWNER 23

Sculptors - F  
(statuettes)

71. 2009. 085. 03028



# Statues of Abraham Lincoln

Daniel Chester French  
Statuettes

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



SALE NUMBER 3802

# IMPORTANT 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN PAINTINGS AND BRONZES

From the Collection of the Late Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge

## Exhibition

From Saturday, October 25 to 3 p.m. Thursday, October 30, 1975  
Galleries open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday

## Public Auction

Friday, October 31, 1975 at 2:00 p.m.

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Cover illustration: Lot 97







18

DANIEL CHESTER FRENCH (1850-1931)

■ 18 ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Signed *D.C. FRENCH* and dated *June 1915*

Bronze, brown patina

Height:  $9\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
24.7 cm.

*Note:* This bronze is a preliminary sketch for the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C. (For additional information see lot 19).

*Provenance*

Margaret French Cresson (daughter of the artist), Stockbridge, Massachusetts  
James Graham & Sons, New York

*Literature*

Craven, Wayne, *Sculpture in America* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968), pp. 403-404; p. 415, fig. 11.11 illus., *cf.*

Dodd, Loring Holmes, *The Golden Age of American Sculpture* (Boston: Mount Vernon Press, 1936), p. 38 illus., *cf.*

Goode, James M., *The Outdoor Sculpture of Washington, D.C.* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1974), pp. 401-402; p. 401 fig. K-9 illus., *cf.*

[See illustration]





DANIEL CHESTER FRENCH (1850-1931)

■ 19 ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Signed *Daniel C. French* and dated *March 1916*; also inscribed  
*ROMAN BRONZE WORKS N.Y.*

Bronze, brown patina

Height: 33 inches  
83.8 cm.

*Note:* This bronze is a working model for the heroic size marble sculpture of the seated figure of Abraham Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C. The architect, Henry Bacon, was chosen to design the building which would house the figure of Lincoln and he in turn recommended that French be named the sculptor for this monumental project. Bacon designed a Doric temple which took form before French began his work on the sculpture in 1915. Three years later French produced his seated figure of Lincoln. The task of carving the monumental piece was undertaken by the six Piccirilli brothers, noted marble carvers of New York City. The figure was carved from twenty-eight blocks of Georgian marble and assembled at the site in West Potomac Park where the Lincoln Memorial was dedicated in 1922.

*Provenance*

Grand Central Art Gallery, New York

*Literature*

Adams, Adeline, *Daniel Chester French. Sculptor* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932), opp. p. 36, illus., *cf.*

Craven, Wayne, *Sculpture in America* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968), 404-403; p. 415, fig. 11.11, illus., *cf.*

Dodd, Loring Holmes, *The Golden Age of American Sculpture* (Boston: Mount Vernon Press, 1936); p. 38, illus., *cf.*

Goode, James M., *The Outdoor Sculpture of Washington, D.C.* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1974), p. 401-402; p. 401, fig. K-9, illus., *cf.*

[See color plate]





*Statuette - large*









DANIEL CHESTER FRENCH (1850-1931)

■ 21 ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Signed *D.C. FRENCH* and dated *Jan. 1911*; also inscribed *GORHAM Co. Founders QZG*

Bronze, brown patina

Height:  $37\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
95.8 cm.

*Note:* This bronze is a cast of the working model for the original heroic size standing figure of Abraham Lincoln executed for Lincoln, Nebraska in 1912.

*Provenance*

James Graham & Sons, New York

*Literature*

Adams, Adeline, *Daniel Chester French, Sculptor* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932), opp. p. 40, illus., *cf.*

Craven, Wayne, *Sculpture in America* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968), p. 402

Dodd, Loring Holmes, *The Golden Age of American Sculpture* (Boston: Mount Vernon Press, 1936), p. 37, illus., *cf.*

[See illustration]





# Price List

In this sale the following lots were sold at the prices stated. Lot numbers which are omitted represent items which were withdrawn, passed, or unsold. NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR TYPOGRAPHICAL ERRORS OR OMISSIONS

SALE NUMBER 3802

## IMPORTANT 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN PAINTINGS AND BRONZES

From the Collection of the Late Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge

Friday, October 31, 1975 at 2:00 p.m.

1	7,000.00	23	1,700.00	45	15,000.00
2	3,000.00	24	450.00	46	9,500.00
3	4,000.00	25	1,600.00	47	12,500.00
4	5,000.00	26	1,900.00	48	8,500.00
5	1,000.00	27	1,800.00	49	5,500.00
6	800.00	28	10,000.00	50	11,000.00
7	8,000.00	29	5,750.00	51	5,250.00
8	2,500.00	30	115,000.00	52	4,000.00
9	5,500.00	31	1,900.00	53	21,000.00
10	5,000.00	32	1,600.00	54	10,000.00
11	850.00	33	1,600.00	55	16,000.00
12	45,000.00	34	2,700.00	56	16,000.00
13	4,200.00	35	2,700.00	57	9,000.00
14	4,500.00	36	9,500.00	58	43,000.00
15	4,000.00	37	6,000.00	59	4,000.00
16	7,500.00	38	4,000.00	60	1,700.00
17	3,100.00	39	11,000.00	61	3,500.00
18	5,000.00	40	1,300.00	62	9,500.00
19	40,000.00	41	3,250.00	63	9,500.00
20	11,000.00	42	11,000.00	64	4,000.00
21	18,000.00	43	7,500.00	65	18,000.00
22	1,500.00	44	15,500.00	66	7,000.00

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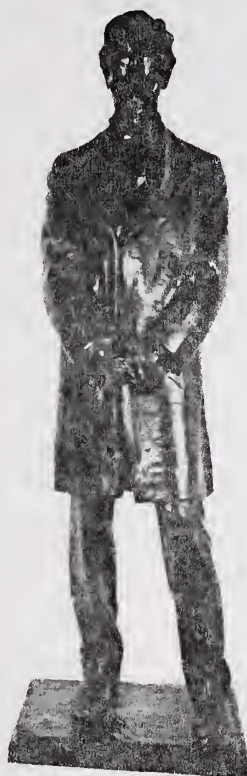


67	5,000.00	89	3,750.00	112	5,000.00
68	13,000.00	90	28,000.00	113	2,500.00
69	3,750.00	91	5,000.00	114	42,500.00
70	4,500.00	92	4,250.00	115	3,700.00
71	5,500.00	93	14,000.00	116	8,250.00
72	21,000.00	94	4,250.00	117	2,800.00
73	10,500.00	95	10,000.00	118	4,250.00
74	19,000.00	96	4,250.00	119	24,000.00
75	2,750.00	97	13,000.00	120	150,000.00
76	3,250.00	98	3,500.00	121	5,250.00
77	4,500.00	99	8,500.00	122	4,250.00
78	3,500.00	100	3,750.00	123	500.00
79	2,750.00	101	3,750.00	124	2,100.00
80	3,750.00 *	102	51,000.00	125	2,500.00
81	10,000.00	104	5,000.00	126	5,000.00
82	7,000.00	105	8,000.00	127	6,000.00
83	24,000.00	106	5,000.00	128	2,000.00
84	4,000.00	107	3,500.00	129	3,250.00
85	4,000.00	108	4,750.00	130	5,250.00
86	5,000.00	109	16,000.00		
87	3,250.00	110	12,000.00		
88	4,250.00	111	10,000.00		
		103	1,300.00		

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Daniel Chester French  
(American 1850-1931),  
Bronze Sculpture, "Abraham Lincoln", H 38½",  
Sun. #21,

■ 21. **DANIEL C. FRENCH: BRONZE STATUE: "Abe Lincoln"**, dated 1912, from the Roman Bronze Works, N.Y., with the inscription "Original model for the statue erected in Lincoln, Nebraska"; originally purchased in 1912-1913 at the Gracie Central Gallery, New York by Milford Stern, and was kept in the family. **DANIEL CHESTER FRENCH:** Born in Exeter, New Hampshire in 1850, and died in 1931. He studied under Dr. William Rimmer in Boston. He won a medal of honor at the Paris Exposition in 1900, and became a National Academy member in 1902. He is most famous for his patriotic works including "The Minute Man of Concord", and his statues at Harvard.

Du Mouchelle Art Galleries  
Detroit, Michigan

\$65,000.00 - \$71,500.00

November 23, 1980







# Carved and Modeled

AMERICAN SCULPTURE 1810-1940

An Exhibition Inaugurating  
the Gallery's Department of American Sculpture  
Organized for the Benefit of Chesterwood,  
Stockbridge, Massachusetts,  
A Property of the National Trust for  
Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.

April 20-June 4, 1982

Hirschl & Adler Galleries  
21 East 70 Street, New York, N.Y. 10021



DANIEL CHESTER FRENCH  
(1850-1931)

28. Abraham Lincoln

Bronze, medium brown patina, 38½ inches high

Signed, dated, and inscribed (on the base):  
© Daniel Chester French Sc/1912

Inscribed (on the base): ORIGINAL  
MODEL FOR THE STATUE ERECTED  
IN LINCOLN/NEBRASKA

Founder's mark (on the base): CAST BY  
ROMAN BRONZE WORKS N-Y-

Recorded: cf. William H. Gerds, "Sculpture by 19th Century American Artists in the Collection of the Newark Museum," in *The Museum*, XIV (Fall 1962, The Newark Museum, New Jersey), pp. 19, 23, illus. p. 19; cf. University Art Galleries, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, *American Sculpture* (1970), no. 58, illus. [n.p.]; cf. Michael Richman, *Daniel Chester French: An American Sculptor* (1976), pp. 121-29, illus. p. 128, no. 10; cf. Whitney Museum of American Art, pp. 62, 274, 340, no. 74, illus. p. 63, fig. 91; cf. The Brooklyn Museum, pp. 176, 226, no. 242

Ex coll: the artist; to [Grand Central Gallery, New York, October 1924]; to Milford Stern, Detroit, Michigan; to his daughter, until 1980

In 1909, on the one-hundredth anniversary of Lincoln's birth, Daniel Chester French was commissioned by the Lincoln Centennial Memorial Association of Nebraska to create a monument to the sixteenth President for the capital city of Lincoln. Having engaged the architect Henry Bacon to design the pedestal and architectural setting for the proposed nine-foot monument, French prepared the working model and com-

pleted it in January 1911. The commissioning board unanimously approved the model, and French then used it as the basis for the full-scale statue.

The Memorial Association ran out of funds toward the end of the project, and it was therefore agreed that in lieu of final payment the sculptor be allowed to have bronzes made from the original working model. Twelve or more of these are recorded as being cast in the years after the monument was officially dedicated in 1912. Of the bronzes, Michael Richman of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C., wrote: "Unquestionably the best of all the bronze multiples that French produced during his career were those from the working model of the standing *Lincoln*" [Richman, *op. cit.*, p. 126].

According to Richman, this bronze is recorded in French's account books for October 1924. It was made for the Association of Painters, Sculptors, and Laymen, and was sold or distributed through Grand Central Gallery, New York, to Milford Stern.

Other versions of the piece are in the collections of the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, the Newark Museum, New Jersey, the University of Nebraska Art Galleries, Lincoln, The Union League, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Stockbridge Plain School, Massachusetts, Ball State Art Gallery, Muncie, Indiana, the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, and Chesterwood, French's home in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. There is a full-size bronze of 1966 at Chesterwood, cast from the large plaster model, which was destroyed in the casting process, and working model plasters in the University of Nebraska Art Galleries, Lincoln, and The New-York Historical Society, New York.







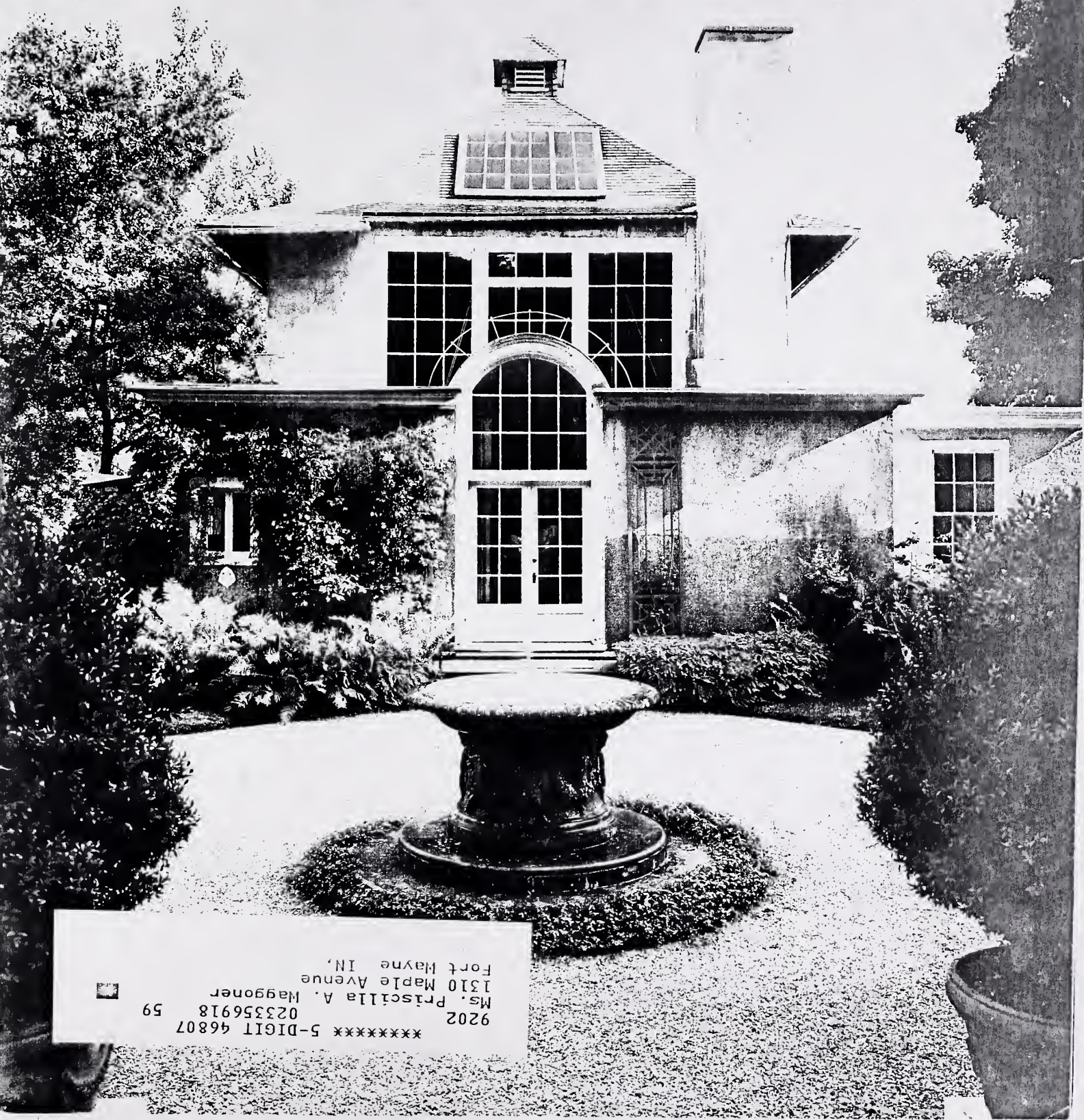




H I S T O R I C

# PRESERVATION

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION ▼ MARCH/APRIL 1992

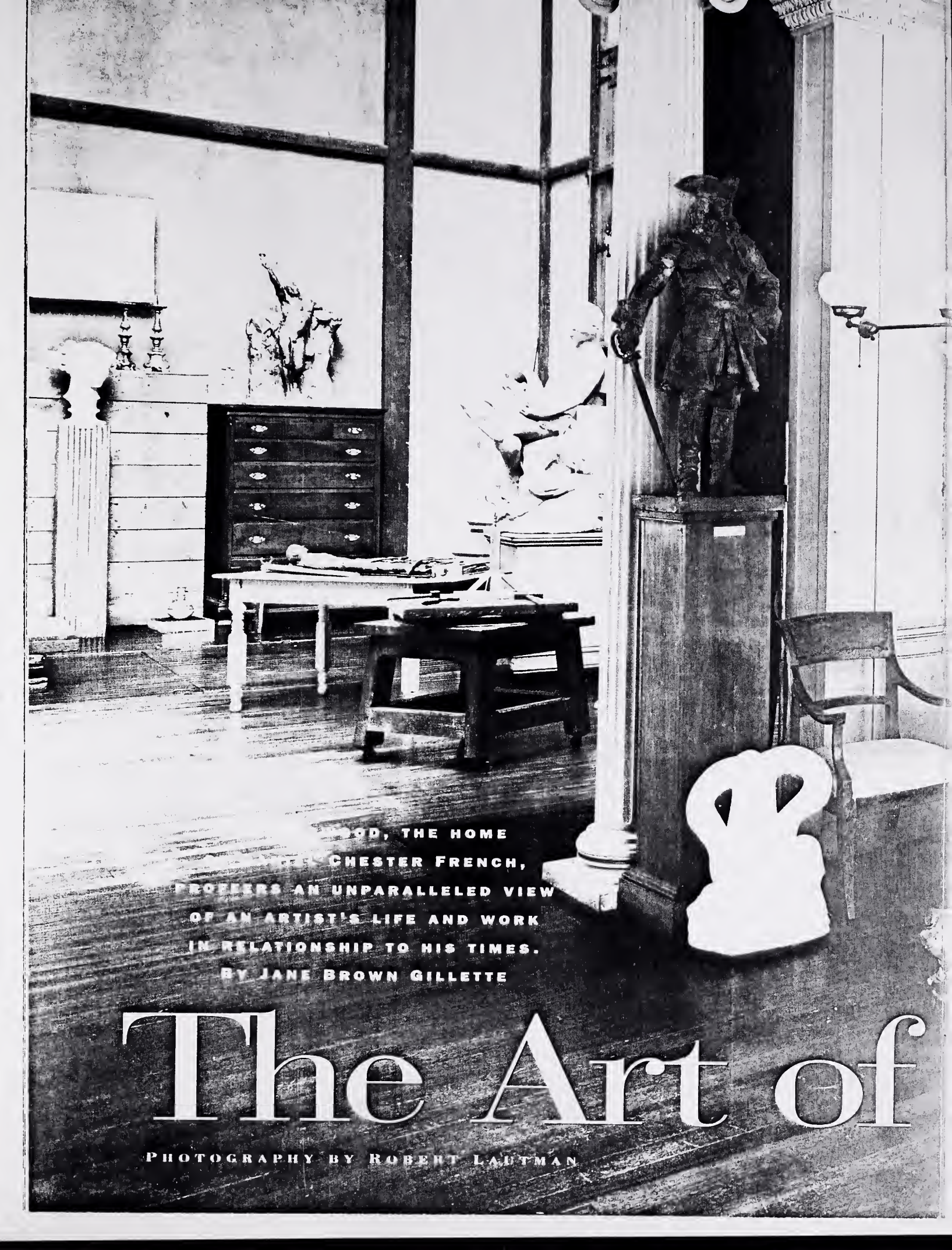


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023356918









IN HIS STUDIO, THE HOME  
OF CHESTER FRENCH,  
PROFERS AN UNPARALLELED VIEW  
OF AN ARTIST'S LIFE AND WORK  
IN RELATIONSHIP TO HIS TIMES.  
BY JANE BROWN GILLETTE

# The Art of

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT LAUTMAN





**The** reception room, where French entertained clients and Mrs. French held her Friday at-homes in rainy weather, reflects the touch of the Frenches' daughter, Margaret French Cresson, who believed the visiting public should see a room that looked like an artist's studio.



LIVING





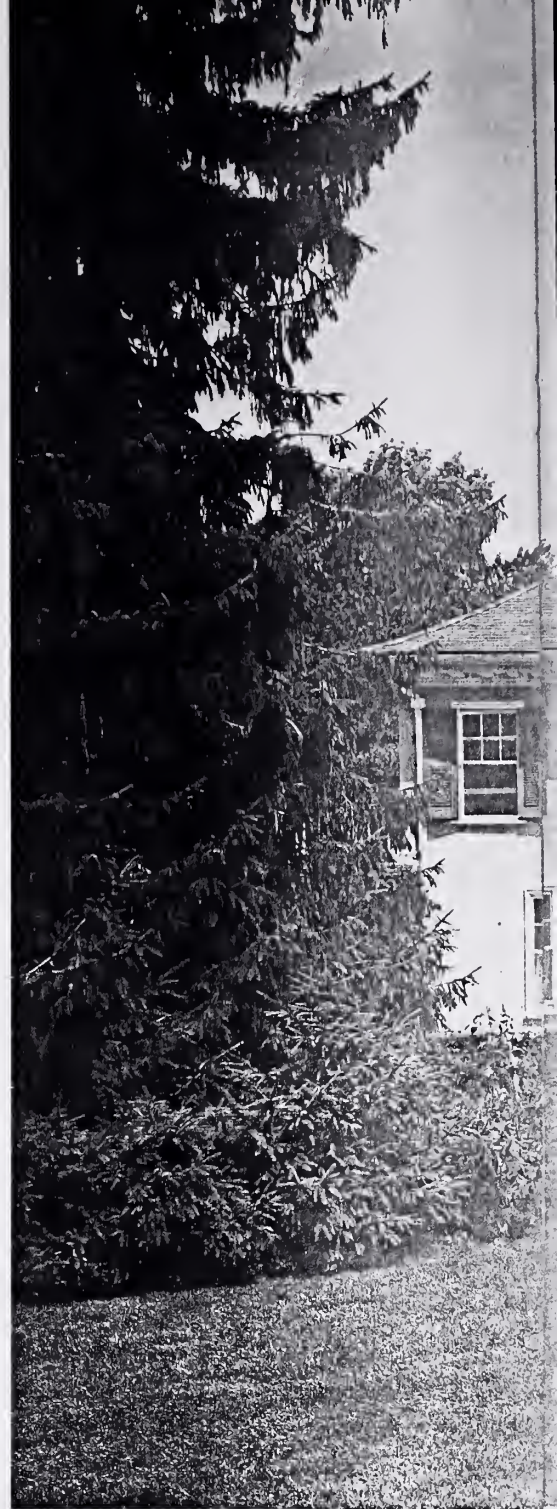
**D**uring the summer of 1991 visitors to Chesterwood, the National Trust property located in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, were greeted by an out-sized string of graduated pearls lying on the lawn. Part of Chesterwood's twelfth annual contemporary sculpture exhibit, the pearls—each, one to three feet in height—were, in fact, fashioned from fiberglass by Karin F. Giusti of New Haven, Connecticut. To Giusti, who “strives for a universality of form and symbol,” the string of pearls symbolized “opulence and wealth” as well as “pearls of wisdom.” In a less-polished outdoor setting—the New Haven waterfront, for example—such a symbol might suggest a contrast between art and life. But displayed on the green velvet of Chesterwood's lawn, within sight of the studio of Daniel Chester French (1850-1931), the creator of some of America's most telling sculptural icons, the string of pearls achieved a dimension beyond irony. They seemed perfectly at home, even beautiful in the right light, an ideal achieved. Here are wealth (if not opulence) and wisdom literally combined. Perhaps Giusti's sculpture also suggested that the minor forms of civilized life—houses, gardens, strings of pearls—celebrate the human quest for an ideal world as surely as do the more monumental forms of art. Certainly the pearls helped visitors carry away from Chesterwood the feeling that French had created

a work of art in his country home as surely as in his seated “Lincoln” or his “Minute Man.”

From his first commissioned statue, the “Minute Man” (1871-1875), French was tremendously successful both in terms of popularity and financial achievement. By 1896 he was able to buy a summer house in the Berkshires with a \$3,000 advance on his current commission, naming the property after his ancestral homestead in Chester, New Hampshire. By all accounts he chose the Marshall Warner farm in the Glendale section of Stockbridge because of its spectacular view of Monument Mountain, but while the farm was in the Berkshires it was not a Berkshire “cottage.” It was relatively small—fewer than 150 acres; the Frenches had a minimal staff; and whereas most of the inhabitants of the Berkshire estates came to play during the fall—Labor Day to November 1 was the season—French came from May 15 to November 1, and he came to work. His first act on acquiring the property was to commission the design of a studio from architect Henry Bacon, with whom French collaborated on scores of projects including the Lincoln Memorial (1911-22). Built in 1898 on the foundations of the old barn, the Italianate, stucco-covered studio featured a reception room for entertaining friends and clients and a veranda from which one could enjoy the view of Monument Mountain. French immediately set about creating a formal garden, which extended from the studio, instead

of from the house—as would be more usual. With French first things came first. The Frenches lived in the original farmhouse until 1901 when Bacon replaced it with the current structure, an eclectic design combining elements of the Georgian and Italian revival styles. As we can see in historic photographs (*Historic Preservation*, April/June 1973), Ches-

**F**rench chose the scenic wallpaper, which brings the outdoors in, as do the French-designed cornucopia capitals. The view from the terrace, above right, offers a magnificent view of Monument Mountain.



terwood was a place of family pleasures, parties of close friends, and unostentatious gaiety. Above all, the property—studio, house, garden, and farm—was a paean to the joy and meaning of work.

Giusti's string of pearls offered the visitor a particularly fitting introduction because Chesterwood is best appreciated in terms of French's life as an artist, and as a public artist at that. “Chesterwood is as close as we can get to the hand of French and his genius for creating images of America as it was emerging as a world









power at the turn of the century," explains Paul Ivory, the director of the property, which is currently undergoing a reevaluation in light of a 1990 colloquium funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Chesterwood will eventually emerge from this process with a new interpretative emphasis that ties the property—through French's life and work—to the broad themes of what was called, even at the time, the American Renaissance.

This *fin de siècle* period found Americans experiencing a crisis in self-image. In

the light of burgeoning industrial wealth and expanding empire, Americans saw themselves as the cultural and political heirs of ancient Rome and Renaissance Italy and France; as if some recondite power were moving inexorably westward, America had become the foremost nation in the world. At the same time Americans felt themselves a threatened remnant no longer empowered by the ideals of a shared colonial experience and about to be engulfed by foreign immigration. Who are we? Americans asked, and out of these

profoundly contradictory impulses American artists in all disciplines summoned up a fertile set of answers, few with more worldly success than French.

Group opinion is always difficult for the cultural historian to measure—who exactly were these Americans we speak of? to what degree were their desires conscious? to what degree a backward reading in light of our own *fin de siècle* fears? French is particularly important in such an analysis because—with 100 public commissions to his credit—he was a prolific, successful

-500011



public sculptor. His work found its place at the heart of an urban aesthetic that conjured up visions of Rome and Paris, placing statues at intersections and circles and favoring buildings enhanced by symbolic sculpture. He also came at a time when the heroes of the Civil War, North and South, demanded memorialization, rising above the carnage on pedestals from which they could take a higher, reconciliatory view. The colonial experience itself required

ican reality. The "Minute Man" shows a young man about to defend his country—and conceivably die for liberty; although his face is that of a New England farmer his pose is inspired by that of the Apollo Belvedere, a cast of which French saw in the Boston Athenaeum. In the college's main quadrangle "John Harvard" (1883-84), clad in iconographic puritan dress, sits with a Bible on his knee, knowing he has helped create a better world

here on earth by founding Harvard College; he is also shortly to die of consumption, and his face with its slight grimace at the contemplation of mortality is modeled on that of Sherman Hoar of Concord—in French's words—"a lineal descendant" of "the early comers to our shores." In the Milmore Memorial (1889-93) a beautiful, classically draped angel of death stays the hand of an equally beautiful young sculptor as he carves a bas-relief of the Sphinx. "Truth," "Romance," "Music," and "Poetry" (in bas-relief on the doors of the Boston Public Library, 1894-1904), "Architecture" (on the Richard Morris Hunt Memorial, 1896-1901), "Brooklyn" and "Manhattan" (1898-1901) are allegorical figures with flowing classical draperies and the faces of New England maidens. And as the seated "Lincoln," his craggy features based on a life mask,

contemplates the tragedy of war, his arms rest on a chair dominated by fasces, the Roman symbol of authority: "What I wanted to convey," writes French, "was the mental and physical strength of the great war president."

Such a generalization does not, of course, do justice to French's work, for it ignores his true artistic gift, but it was with this symbolic vocabulary that he spoke to his times—and to the patrons who are at the heart of public sculpture. French was an artist not an artisan, a modeler not a carver, a designer not a craftsman, a busi-

nessman not a tortured soul in revolt. For the most part he did not create the work, then try to sell it. "The public sculptor has to be initially contacted by a client who comes to him and says, 'I have this idea for a monument. Are you willing to do it?'" explains French expert Michael Richman. "It was French's ability to respond not only to the idea but to the inventor of the idea. Once the sculptor and the client have agreed to a project, then what becomes essential is, first, how the artist realizes his vision and, then, how he gets his client to accept that vision." The locus of this persuasive exchange was the maquette, the rough clay "sketch," in which the sculptor first presents in three-dimensional form his embodiment of the idea.

After persuading the client to accept the maquette, French would produce a clay working model, and finally a full-size one. In order to solve particular problems of modeling he sometimes studied plaster casts taken from friends as well as models. "In our storage area we have lots of arms and shoulders and wings and necks," says Susan Frisch Lehrer, the assistant director of Chesterwood. "We have a Miss Anderson, whose foot was used for the Spencer Trask Memorial [1913-15]," says Lehrer. French used a cast of his own right hand as a model for that of the seated Lincoln. Sometimes for the fun of it, "visitors would come to the studio, and if he liked a hand, say, he would make a cast of it and he'd write their name on it." Of course French also used professional models. Preparing for an exhibit a decade ago, Lehrer was fortunate enough to interview one of the models for "Andromeda" (1929-31). Asked if she posed in a bathing suit, as was the rumor, the model "said, 'No, I modeled in the nude. I was an art student. I was paid seventy-five cents an hour. His chauffeur would pick me up in the morning, every hour a maid would come out with saltine crackers and milk and we'd have a little break. He was the proper gentleman.'"

After the full-size clay model was completed, a plaster cast of it was sent off to be cast in bronze or carved into marble by teams of specialized carvers. Finally French would do the detail carving and the finishing of the marble surface. His concern, then, was with the art and the design—and the patronage. And thanks to the



**T**he studio casting room reveals the process and tools of French's art. In the studio, opposite, stages of the "Lincoln" and his last work, "Andromeda" dominate a small group of French's "clay and marble folk."

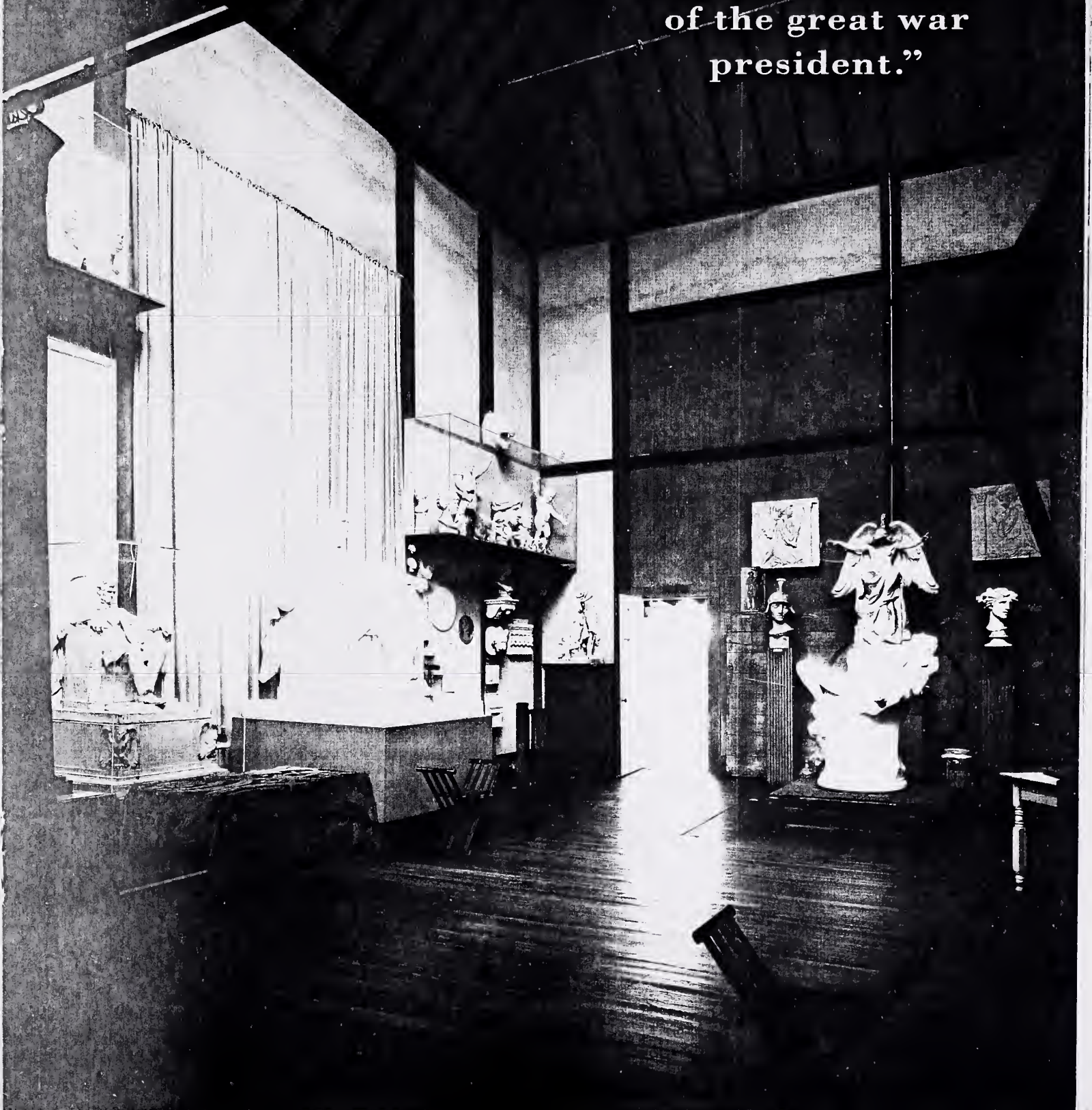
continuing idealization, while changing religious attitudes dictated graveyards full of beautiful marble angels rather than stark death's heads.

French's vision spoke to his age. In many of his works a classical approach to an ideal form soothes—although it does not erase—the pain and anguish of Amer-





**“What I wanted  
to convey was  
the mental and  
physical strength  
of the great war  
president.”**







**"I fear my inclination is to ignore too much the gloom and emphasize the beauty and joy of life."**



diligence of his daughter, Margaret French Cresson, Chesterwood has more than 500 of French's maquettes and casts. Mrs. Cresson was responsible for recovering many of these and for founding in 1962 the Daniel Chester French Foundation to operate the studio as a museum. (The studio and garden had been open to the public on a less formal basis since 1955.) She donated much of Chesterwood to the National Trust in 1969, and upon her death in 1973 the whole property passed into Trust hands. With the casts and models, as well

as an archive of more than 100,000 items, Chesterwood is, as Richman points out, "the museum of patronage and process." Certainly it presents the chance to see the life and work of an important artist in relation to his time to a degree afforded by few museums in the world.

In writing to a friend in 1919 French admitted "I am afraid my 'Memory' [1886, 1901-19] shows too little of 'human joys and sufferings,' and I fear my inclination is to ignore too much the gloom and emphasize the beauty and joy of life—leaving out

the snake which, alas! was devised with Paradise. I haven't been able entirely to eliminate it from my everyday life, but why not at least forget it in the life that I live with my clay and marble folk? I like to think that perhaps for a minute or two, through my marble lady, you too were led into the serpentless Paradise of my dreams."

The exact nature of this "snake" is not readily apparent in French's life. A product of what his daughter called "a pure New England heritage, Anglo-Saxon to







the core." French grew up in Exeter, New Hampshire, and Cambridge and Concord, Massachusetts, the youngest of four children of a judge who was also an accomplished farmer. He was reserved, a true product of puritan ancestors and a New England heritage, but "he was a good man," says Wanda Styka, Chesterwood's archivist, who stresses French's "cheerful disposition. His father wrote that he was born 'at the most appropriate hour in the day, while the sun was rising, and all the wild birds were singing.'" Undoubtedly

there were dark moments. When French was six his mother died; as a youth he had difficulties finding himself; and his wife's health was not strong. But almost as soon as French discovered his talent for sculpting he won the commission of the "Minute Man"—and instant acclaim. A stint in Italy sharpened his sculptural skills and his taste for the classical. His marriage to his first cousin, Mary, and his devotion to his daughter, his friends, his philanthropy, his fame, his daughter's promotion of his reputation—French's life seems as sunny as the morning he was born, and the overarching light comes from his love of work. As he told his son-in-law Penn Cresson, "I'd like to live to be two thousand years old and just sculpt all the time!"

If French seems an unlikely artist to express the conflicted image of America, he seems ideally suited to be a public sculptor. "French was a superb businessman," says Richman. He was "a very good executive producer. He knew when to delegate, he was very disciplined, very organized." Lehrer confirms this vision of French. "He worked in a jacket and tie every day. He had a part-time secretary. He kept exquisite accounts. People enjoyed working with him. He was not a prima donna." Quite reasonably Chesterwood expresses French's sunny disposition: his ancestral and filial pride, his domestic happiness, his love of nature, and his preference for order and moderation in the daily round of life. It proposes an unconflicted integration of work and leisure, of the past and the future, of art and nature, an ideal

**The parlor, above right, is an architectural replica of that in French's grandfather's house in Chester, New Hampshire. The study, right, features paneling from the Marshall Warner farmhouse. A bust of Margaret as Bacchante by Evelyn Beatrice Longman graces the breakfast porch, above left.**

not of extremes but of order, proportion, and moderation—qualities the absence of which no doubt exacerbated the American self-doubt of the period.

Margaret French Cresson, reminiscing about Chesterwood (*Historic Preservation*, April/June 1973), writes, "In his later years someone inquired of my father, 'Do you live in the country all the year around, Mr. French?' He whimsically replied, 'No,







I live here six months of the year—in heaven. The other six months I live, well—in New York.’” Like French’s “clay and marble folk,” Chesterwood also expresses “the serpentless Paradise of my dreams.”

The implied contrast between Chesterwood as heaven and New York City as hell helps to place the property in a venerable tradition of country living that, for Western man, goes back at least 2,000 years to the villas of ancient Rome. James Ackerman, exploring the form and ideology of country houses in *The Villa* (Princeton University Press, 1990), describes a villa as

public and early Roman Empire (Cato, Virgil, Horace, Pliny the Younger), fifteenth-century Italy (Poliziano, Bembo), eighteenth-century England (Pope, Austen), or the American Renaissance (James, Wharton). In style the villa tends to two forms: a compact light-colored cube that serves as a foil for the natural environment or an open-extended natural-colored type that embraces the ground—or a conscious mixture of the two kinds, of which Chesterwood would be an example. Several design concerns relate to the site, an orientation of the house to the best

noting the progress in the vegetable garden and grape arbor and perhaps checking on the construction of a stone wall along the road. Work in the studio started at nine. At twelve French lunched in the house with his family. After signing his daily correspondence the sculptor returned to the studio where he worked until five. The next hour and a half were spent in outdoor work: weeding the garden, attending to the hydraulic ram that pumped water to the buildings from a spring down the hill, or perhaps cleaning out a clogged drain. Supper was at seven.”

As Styka points out, “French once said that he had so much to do that if he didn’t go about it in a methodical manner it would never get done.” Whatever functional purpose his routine accomplished, it wove together the house, studio, and grounds in a fabric of artistic and manual work. This interweaving finds expression in French’s garden book, which is in the Library of Congress. Says Lehrer, “It tells what he planted and what was growing and what he harvested, and then every now and then he’ll throw out, ‘I’m working on such and such a statue, or so and so is coming to model today.’” (Architectural historian Richard Guy Wilson points out that the studio recalls in its appearance a vernacular farm building of Renaissance Italy.) French’s daughter says that French was a “good New England farmer, and when he sold five tons of hay to a neighbor, to be paid for in labor or manure, he was as pleased with the transaction as though he had just completed a statue” and notes that “where other men played golf, he clipped all the hedges.” As important as his usual work, “country work” was also relaxation.

As work and play are integrated at Chesterwood, so too are the past and the future. The very naming of the property recalls French’s decision as an adolescent to add Chester to his own name as a reminder of the family homestead in Chester, New Hampshire. As his daughter writes in *Journey into Fame* (Harvard University Press, 1947), “Daniel Chester French he called himself, partly because it made him feel more important, but mostly because he loved the old place so and wanted to keep his association with it.” In a similar gesture French had Bacon replicate the parlor of (Continued on Page 90)



**C**hesterwood hosts an annual exhibit of contemporary sculpture on its grounds; on the lawn at the back of the house, a string of pearls by Karin F. Giusti glows in the mist. French designed a railroad, opposite, on which works meant to be viewed outdoors could be inspected in natural light.

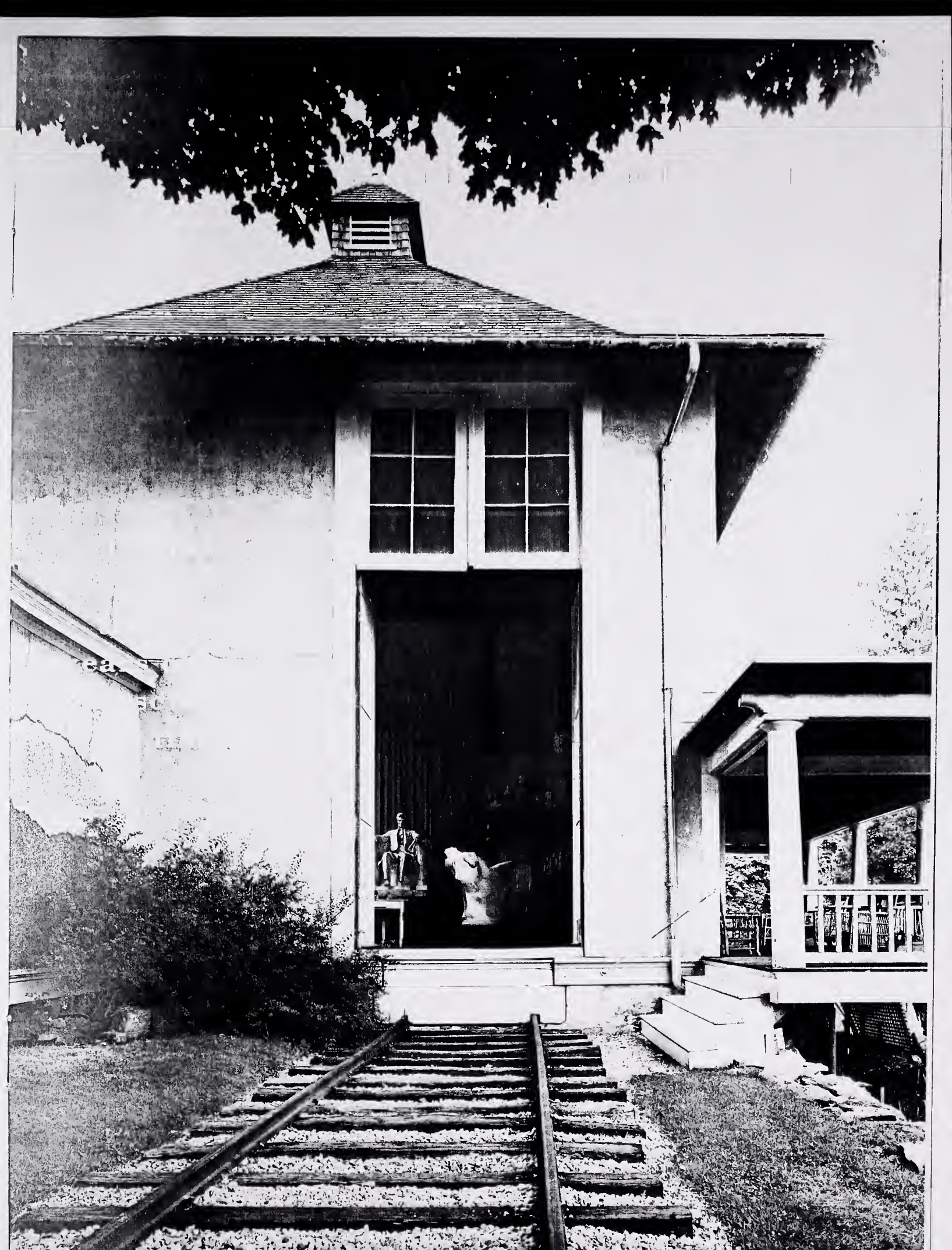
“a building in the country, designed for its owner’s enjoyment and relaxation.” Unlike the traditional vernacular farmhouse, the “villa is typically the product of an architect’s imagination and asserts its modernity.” It is part of an intellectual or literary movement that ultimately revolves around national definition, whether the literary works are those of the late Re-

view and a concern with the surrounding gardens. Most important, however, “the villa cannot be understood apart from the city; it exists not to fulfill autonomous functions but to provide a counterbalance to urban values and accommodations.”

One such counterbalance particularly pertinent to Chesterwood is an idealization of country life and farm work. While spending his six months in the country French divided his work day into an orderly routine, described by Ivory in a postscript to Richman’s *Daniel Chester French, An American Sculptor* (The Preservation Press, 1983): “French breakfasted early, drafted correspondence in his study, and then went for a walk around the property.









FREYER, DANIEL C

DRAPER 23

Sculptors - F  
(statuettes)



